

Introduction

The College of Nurses of Ontario (the College) bases its Quality Assurance (QA) Program on the principle that lifelong learning is essential to continuing competence. Members demonstrate their commitment to continually improving their nursing practice, in every setting, by:

- engaging in practice reflection; and
- setting and achieving learning goals.

It is mandatory for every nurse in Ontario to participate in the College's QA Program. The *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* states that each health regulatory college must develop, establish and maintain a program to promote continuing competence for its members, and that members must meet the requirements of their college's QA Program.

The College consulted with nurses across the province to develop its QA Program. The program is designed to:

- support nurses in practising according to the College's standards of practice;
- facilitate practice development in areas the nurse needs to improve in; and
- increase the public's confidence in the nursing profession.

The QA Program measures a member's knowledge and application of the College's practice standards.¹ Each year, the College will select two practice standards as the focus of the year's QA Program.² You must review these practice standards and apply them in your Learning Plan.

In addition, Nurse Practitioners (NPs) must review the College's *Nurse Practitioners* practice standard.

QA Program Components

The QA Program includes the following components:

1. Self-Assessment
 - a) Practice Reflection
 - b) Developing and maintaining a Learning Plan
2. Practice Assessment
3. Peer Assessment

Component 1: Self-Assessment

Self-Assessment is a self-directed, two-part process that results in a Learning Plan. You must participate in this component.

Through the Self-Assessment process, you identify your learning needs in relation to the two practice standards selected for the QA Program. The learning needs incorporate the following elements:

- advances in technology;³
- changes in the practice environment;⁴
- entry-to-practice competencies;⁵ and
- interprofessional care.⁶

There are two parts to the Self-Assessment component.

Part A: Practice Reflection

Determining your strengths and areas you need to improve by reflecting on your practice and obtaining peer⁷ input will help you to continually improve your competence as a nurse. Practice Reflection can include participating in the College's online learning modules.

Peer input builds on practice reflection by providing greater awareness of your strengths and opportunities for learning. Use the results of Practice Reflection to create your learning goals.

Part B: Developing and maintaining a Learning Plan to meet your learning goals.

The results of Practice Reflection will form the basis of your Learning Plan.

A Learning Plan is a record of your ongoing participation in activities that help maintain your competence as a nurse. The plan outlines how you relate practice standards to your nursing practice. It articulates learning goals based on your Practice Reflection, and the activities you will undertake to achieve those goals. The College expects nurses to update their Learning Plan regularly and to keep each Learning Plan for two years.

Component 2: Practice Assessment

Each year, the College randomly selects nurses to participate in Practice Assessment,⁸ which includes a review of the member's completed Learning Plans and other specified assessments (such as an objective multiple-choice test on the two practice standards selected for the program). The College may also require NPs to participate in additional assessments.

Component 3: Peer Assessment

All nurses selected for Practice Assessment must submit their Learning Plan for a Peer Assessment review.

During Peer Assessment, a peer assessor⁹ reviews a nurse's Learning Plan and other specified assessment results. The College's QA Committee then reviews the peer assessor's report and can recommend or direct that the member complete remedial learning activities.

Members who have successfully completed the process must continue to maintain and update their Learning Plan on an ongoing basis.

Resources

The College has a number of resources to help you meet your QA Program requirements.

- Refer to the *Self-Assessment: A Guide to Developing Your Learning Plan 2009-2010* and *Self-Assessment: Learning Plan Form* QA documents for information and forms you need to complete your Self-Assessment.
- The learning modules, tools and practice documents referred to in this fact sheet are at www.cno.org/qa.

For More Information

Contact the College at:

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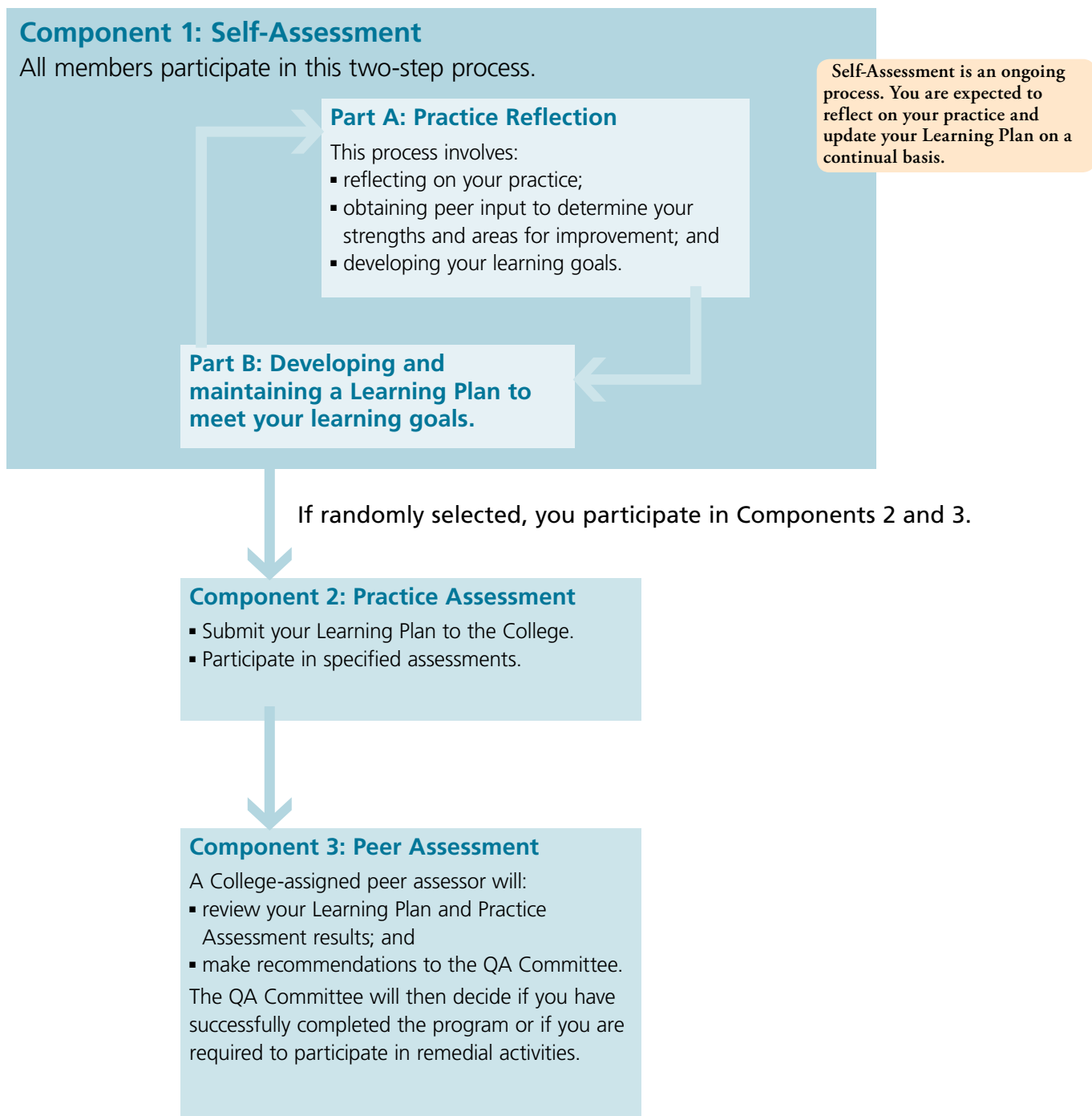
Toll-free in Ontario: 1 800 387-5526

Fax: 416 928-6507

Website: www.cno.org

Flow Chart

This diagram illustrates the three components of the QA Program.



Endnotes

- ¹ For the purposes of the QA Program, the term *practice standard* refers to a College practice standard or practice guideline. A practice standard outlines the knowledge, skill and judgment necessary for safe practice, and includes accountabilities and responsibilities. Practice standards and guidelines are at www.cno.org/publications.
- ² Each year, the two practice standards selected for the QA Program will be available at www.cno.org/qa. You can use other College practice standards and guidelines in your Practice Reflection or Learning Plan, but only in addition to the selected practice standards.
- ³ The term *advances in technology* is defined as the introduction of new, innovative or different skills, processes or knowledge into a nurse's practice setting. For example, learning how to use a new electronic documentation system.
- ⁴ The term *changes in the practice environment* refers to changes that require additional knowledge, skill and judgment for a nurse to deliver safe, effective and ethical nursing care. For example, changes in the client population, nursing care delivery systems or legislation.
- ⁵ The term *entry-to-practice competencies* refers to the expectations for all nurses throughout their career. The RN, RPN and NP competency statements are at www.cno.org/qa.
- ⁶ The term *interprofessional care* is defined as the provision of comprehensive health services to patients by multiple health caregivers who work collaboratively to deliver quality care within and across settings. [Health Force Ontario (2007). *Interprofessional Care: A Blueprint for Action in Ontario*. Retrieved July 14, 2009, from www.healthforceontario.ca.]
- ⁷ The term *peer* is defined as any member of the interprofessional team who understands your role as a nurse. A peer does not have to be in the same role as you.
- ⁸ Registration class determines the cycle for being randomly selected for Practice Assessment. Once a member of the General Class has completed a Practice Assessment, she or he is removed from the selection pool for 10 years. NPs are eligible to be selected for Practice Assessment in their third year of registration in the Extended Class. NPs who have participated in a Practice Assessment are exempt from selection for five years.
- ⁹ A College-assigned peer assessor is a nurse with an in-depth understanding of College practice standards and guidelines.



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